

INTRODUCTION

THE BACKGROUND

Passage in 1990 of the *State Growth Management Act (GMA) (RCW 36.70A)* significantly changed the requirements for local planning. Under the *GMA*, each county was required to adopt a comprehensive plan. The law requires that each county in consultation with its cities:

- plan for a 20-year population forecast provided by the State Office of Financial Management (OFM) and distribute this forecast equitably and realistically throughout the county;
- collectively identify urban growth areas for each city and town using service standards and land development suitability as measures; and,
- draft plans which, at a minimum, include land use, transportation, housing, utilities, capital facilities, and rural elements.

THE GOALS

In adopting the *Growth Management Act*, the legislature found that uncoordinated and unplanned growth, together with a lack of common goals expressing the public's interest in the conservation and wise use of our lands, posed a threat to the environment, sustainable economic development, and the health, safety and high quality of life enjoyed by residents of the state. The legislature established thirteen goals to guide the creation and adoption of comprehensive plans and development regulations in the counties and cities that are required to or choose to plan under the *Act*. These goals provided the basis for the policies in the *Community Framework Plan*. They include the following:

1. **Urban Growth:** Encourage development in urban areas where adequate public facilities and services exist or can be provided in an efficient manner.
2. **Reduce Sprawl:** Reduce the inappropriate conversion of

undeveloped land into sprawling, low-density development.

3. **Transportation:** Encourage efficient, multi-modal transportation systems that are based on regional priorities and coordinated with county and city comprehensive plans.
4. **Housing:** Encourage the availability of affordable housing to all economic segments of the population of this state, promote a variety of residential densities and housing types, and encourage preservation of existing housing stock.
5. **Economic Development:** Encourage economic development throughout the state that is consistent with adopted comprehensive plans, promote economic opportunity for all citizens of this state, especially for unemployed and disadvantaged persons, and encourage growth in areas experiencing insufficient economic growth, all within the capacities of the state's natural resources, public services and public facilities.
6. **Property Rights:** Private property shall not be taken for public use without just compensation having been made. The property rights of landowners shall be protected from arbitrary and discriminatory actions.
7. **Permits:** Applications for both state and local permits should be processed in a timely and fair manner to ensure predictability.
8. **Natural Resource Industries:** Maintain and enhance natural resource-based industries, including productive timber, agricultural, and fisheries industries. Encourage the conservation of productive forest lands and productive agricultural lands, and discourage incompatible uses.
9. **Open Space and Recreation:** Encourage the retention of open space and development of recreational opportunities, conserve fish and wildlife habitat, increase access to natural

resource lands and water, and develop parks.

10. **Environment:** Protect the environment and enhance the state's high quality of life, including air and water quality, and the availability of water.

11. **Citizen Participation and Coordination:** Encourage the involvement of citizens in the planning process and ensure coordination between communities and jurisdictions to reconcile conflicts.

12. **Public Facilities and Services:** Ensure that those public facilities and services necessary to support development shall be adequate to serve the development at the time the development is available for occupancy and use without decreasing current service levels below locally established minimums.

13. **Historic Preservation:** Identify and encourage the preservation of lands, sites and structures that have historical or archaeological significance.

In 1991 the legislature amended the *GMA* to require adoption of "countywide" planning policies that would provide a procedural framework for coordinated production of comprehensive plans. A Steering Committee comprised of elected officials from Clark County jurisdictions began working on countywide planning policies in the summer of 1991. In August 1992, the Board of County Commissioners adopted the policies.

THE VISION

Our county is in the midst of change. As with any rapidly urbanizing area, problems exist that spark the need for managing growth:

- growth throughout Clark County has sometimes been haphazard and without adequate availability of social and environmental services as well as public facilities;
- prime agricultural, needed industrial and undeveloped lands have sometimes been inappropriately converted into low density sprawl;
- transportation planning and infrastructure development have

sometimes been inconsistent with other aspects of land use planning and sometimes have not been constructed in a timely manner;

- access to education, training and living wage employment has sometimes been limited and inequitable; increasing housing costs has lead to limited affordability for an increasing number of residents;
- local government processes and requirements have sometimes been inadequate to respond appropriately to changing conditions and quality of life value shifts;
- natural resources, air quality and water quality have sometimes been degraded;
- open and natural space development opportunities have been lost;
- lands, structures and sites of historical and/or archeological significance have sometimes been compromised or sacrificed to other uses; and,
- public processes at the neighborhood, community and inter-community levels have sometimes been inadequate and lacking in coordination.

The first step in addressing such problems is to develop a vision of a desirable future.

The *Community Framework Plan*, which was adopted in April 1993, is a long-term vision of what the county could become. Conceptual in nature, it proposes changing the current trends, which, if left unchecked, could result in problems similar to those experienced by other regions that failed to adequately plan for future growth. The *Framework Plan* envisions contained urban areas and rural centers within larger natural resource and rural areas. Consistent with the *Growth Management Act*, the *Framework Plan* emphasizes distinctions between urban, rural and resource to maintain a range of options for living which are valued by county residents. The purpose of the *Framework Plan* was to establish consensus about which lands will eventually be committed to urban uses and which should remain rural. It will have a major role in defining life in Clark county -- where we will work and shop, the types of housing we will live in, where our children will go to school, the lands that will continue to serve as natural

resources, the amount of open space we will enjoy, and how we will travel from place to place. The *Framework Plan* is the foundation for the *20-Year Comprehensive Growth Management Plan*.

The *20-Year Plan* has been developed to manage Clark County's growth in ways that will result in a better future for our community. It describes a future that will protect and conserve natural, financial and human resources to continue the quality of life enjoyed by Clark County's residents. The *Plan* could not have been successfully completed without extensive, broad-based citizen participation throughout the process. That level of participation must continue to occur for successful ongoing implementation and monitoring of the *20-Year Plan*.

Clark County residents generally recognize continued growth will continue over the next 20 to 50 years, but, at the same time, they are concerned with some of the impacts growth may generate. Although the exact amount of growth and its timing are unknown, through the growth management planning process, general consensus has been developed about where growth should occur and what it should look like. Growth management can be generally defined as the combined use of a wide range of techniques by a community to determine the amount, type and rate of development the community desires and to channel that growth into designated areas.

In the next 20 years, Clark County and its cities will grow in population (to an estimated 416,071 people) and jobs (to an estimated 138,500). As a result, the character of the county will change in ways which reflect the ongoing urbanization of city areas. This will include demographic changes such as:

- increased household growth and residential densities in some areas;
- an increased percentage of smaller households;
- increased percentages of older residents and residents with special service needs;
- increased racial, ethnic and cultural diversity;
- an increased need for equitable education and training as well as lifetime learning opportunities;

- increased percentages of workers employed in the service sector and of households with two or more workers;
- an increased percentage of residents living on fixed incomes;
- an increased need for varying types of housing including affordable housing;
- increased housing construction and land costs;
- increased travel demand, traffic volume and registered vehicles; and,
- an increased need to preserve and protect the natural environment.

Given the trends and changes coming to Clark County, maintaining and/or enhancing our quality of life will require considerable foresight, ongoing cooperative and broad-based planning, consistent monitoring of *Plan* implementation, and revisions to the *20-Year Plan* where necessary to assure a high quality of life. This will require diligence on the community's part, not only to make sound decisions now but to monitor the *20-Year Plan* in the future. While the *20-Year Plan* will be updated over time to reflect changing attitudes and circumstances, it is important to remember that once development occurs it cannot easily be reversed. The results of the decisions the community makes or fails to make now will be with us for generations to come.

Through the planning process we have learned that most of us desire a high quality of life. That vision is comprised of:

- healthy, safe and productive neighborhoods and communities;
- friendly, cooperative and engaged residents who celebrate diverse backgrounds, ethnicities and cultures;
- a variety of housing options;
- a thriving, sustainable economy with private and public workplaces and business centers that act responsibly toward their employees and the communities that foster their success;
- quality schools meeting the educational and training needs of all residents;

- public and private institutions working in true partnership with the community to deliver high quality services; and,
- open, responsive and accountable local government that works to create a true sense of community and to create democratic processes on all levels.

THE COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT PROCESS

Over the past three years, the growth management process, which is also known as the "*Perspectives*" Program, has involved the people of Clark County (both interest groups and individuals) in planning to implement the *Growth Management Act*. This community involvement program included the processes that led to both the *Community Framework Plan* and the *20-Year Comprehensive Growth Management Plan*. The planning process for the *Framework Plan* began in October 1991. It involved staff from the eight cities and Clark County; individuals and interest groups; and representatives from the special districts, other agencies and utility providers in a broad-based, public driven effort.

Most major planning programs involve a citizen involvement component, but it is rarely the central focus of the effort. In this case, the county wanted every interested party to have an opportunity to participate in the planning process in a meaningful way, and to use the program to develop new relationships with affected agencies and groups. The typical approach of appointing a special citizen's advisory committee was explicitly rejected in favor of outreach to the general public at all key decision points and hands-on involvement from affected agencies and groups.

The *Perspectives Program* has been successful in ensuring citizen participation as the center of the planning process, and has lead to a multi-faceted dialogue with other agencies and the public to develop a consensus-based growth management program. The *Perspectives Program* has included the following components:

- A **Steering Committee** of Mayors and County Commissioners to review and comment on regional growth management related policies and programs.

- A **Technical Advisory Committee** of planning staff from the county, eight cities, and special districts including the school districts, Port of Vancouver, C-Tran and Clark Public Utilities to coordinate technical analysis and suggest appropriate policies to the Steering Committee.
- **Issue-based subcommittees** open to all interested parties to provide input on specific issues (i.e., housing, transportation, economic development, public facilities, utilities, parks, and rural issues).
- Nine **newsletters** which were sent to every household in the County (over 100,000 households) reporting on the *20-Year Plan's* progress and informing residents of upcoming opportunities for involvement.
- Eight ***Perspectives Papers* addressing specific issues** which were mailed to those residents who indicated an interest in more specific information on growth management topics (over 6,000 people).
- A **toll-free telephone hotline** for residents with specific questions about the process or any issue. The hotline was maintained until adoption of the *20-Year Plan*.
- A **speakers bureau** of staff planners who went to every organization or group requesting a presentation on the growth management planning program.
- Joint sponsorship of a **monthly cable television series** on growth management issues (CVTV reaches 45,000 Clark County households).
- **News releases** to all media and personal contacts with staff at small newspapers to explain the issues and process to them. The county also bought advertising in local newspapers to announce public meetings.
- Three statistically valid, random-sample **telephone surveys** of residents opinions to judge the success of other outreach efforts and to gauge the issues and direction the *20-Year Plan* should take.

- Two **mail-in surveys** included in newsletters sent to every household. The results of these surveys (5,700 responses) were tabulated and compared to the results from the telephone surveys.
- Early in the process, the county was divided into two planning areas - **urban and rural**. The **rural** area was reviewed by a citizens committee that recommended areas to be conserved for agriculture, forest and mineral resources. The **urban** area was reviewed by each city with the assistance of county staff and local citizen steering committees. These areas are referred to as **Partnership Planning Areas**.
- Joint sponsorship and staffing of the **Youth in Government** 1992 and 1993 annual program focusing on growth management and transportation planning.
- **Eight Visioning Workshops** throughout the county to get input on what is "right" and "wrong" with Clark County, and what residents hope to get out of the growth management planning process (over 700 people attended).
- **Five Planning Fairs** held throughout the county to explain key issues and get public input on alternative long-term approaches to the *Community Framework Plan*. Over 500 people attended the planning fairs which were staffed by the cities, county, special districts and public interest groups (League of Women Voters).
- **Two Previews** of the selected *Community Framework Plan* concept were held (one in an urban area and one in a rural area).
- Special **workshops for public officials held concurrently with** public meetings in order to give officials an opportunity to ask questions and gain a better understanding of the implications of growth management for their jurisdiction or special district, and to discuss the issues with other public officials in the same position.
- Sponsorship of a **lecture series** by John DeGrove on concurrency and growth management to aid local residents, elected officials and staff in understanding the implications of the concurrency requirement of the *GMA*, and to avoid mistakes made in Florida and Georgia in implementing concurrency.
- Joint sponsorship with the City of Vancouver of the Anton Neleson **Visual Preference Survey**, to assist residents and planners in thinking about development in new and innovative ways.
- A major exhibit at the **Clark County Fair** to reach as many residents as possible with information about growth management and the *Perspectives Program*.
- A **traveling exhibit on growth management**, which has been taken to major employers in an effort to reach as many residents as possible.
- **Four Planning information meetings** throughout the county to explain the *20-Year Plan Elements* and the alternatives in the *Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement*.
- An **open House** at the planning offices every Wednesday night to explain the alternative land use plans being proposed.
- A major effort to have staff **meet with concerned citizens** regarding their specific requests and other growth management related issues.
- A **newsletter** providing information on the alternatives developed through the *Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement* and soliciting input to the process.
- A series of **public hearings** before the County Planning Commission and Board of County Commissioners prior to adoption of either the *Community Framework Plan* or the *20-year Plan*.

THE COMMUNITY FRAMEWORK PLANNING PROCESS

The citizen participation process for the *Community Framework Plan* resulted in the expression of a wide variety of opinions regarding appropriate population densities, property rights, provision and costs of public facilities and services and whether all urban development should occur within cities. Beginning with workshops and surveys conducted in 1991, planning staff collected and analyzed opinions that resulted in the identification of the six top issues which were:

- preserve open space and natural areas;
- protect property rights and keep taxes low;
- continue to permit large-lot rural development;
- encourage land development that preserves a sense of place and a feeling of community;
- encourage development of high capacity transit including light rail; and,
- develop a better balance of employment opportunities and housing in the county.

In 1992, county staff refined concepts into three alternative community framework plans. Each of these three plans achieved different goals expressed by the public in the 1991 public processes. In June and July 1992, a second round of public workshops was held, illustrating the three alternatives with maps and written information. County and city planning staff participated in the workshops by providing information and explaining the features of each alternative. A newsletter describing the alternatives and inviting comment was mailed to every household. Approximately 700 people attended the 1992 workshops and more than 750 people gave written responses. The majority of participants preferred the concept known as the "Hometown" alternative, which conserves resource lands and natural areas and allows for the development of a high capacity transit system. Written comments also indicated that the following features appealed most to the respondents:

- preservation of open space;

- a compact development pattern, with employment, shopping and a choice of housing located close to each other;
- preservation of rural lands; and,
- the potential for development of alternative types of transportation including light rail.

The county then prepared a *Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)* for the *Community Framework Plan*. It identified the potential negative impacts associated with each alternative. Using this information and the input from the second round of public meetings, in October 1992 the county and its cities, prepared and distributed for comment a draft *Community Framework Plan*. In addition, a newsletter describing the draft plan and many of its key policies was mailed to every household. It invited residents to attend upcoming county meetings and indicated that a DEIS was available.

A third round of public meetings ("Previews") was held in December 1992, with more than 200 people attending. As with previous meetings, there were diverse opinions with respect to densities, property rights and government controls. Frequent comments included:

- hometown alternative is the best alternative plan concept and reflects values from previous public input;
- no more strip malls are wanted and there is need to blend existing strip development into more user-friendly places;
- the county needs more open space, parks and trails, and needs to preserve the beauty of Clark County;
- urban areas should have more dense development (including "granny" flats, duplexes, condominiums, and mixed-use development) with large open spaces as buffers and with high density development placed in urban areas and near transportation facilities;
- passed over parcels should be developed (infill) before allowing new development outside urban areas; and,
- land zoned for industrial uses should be increased.

Other comments emphasized the need to:

- preserve the character of the existing neighborhoods;
- provide larger lots (1/2 to 5 acres in size);
- develop incentives to conserve resource lands;
- adopt right-to-farm and harvest ordinances;
- ensure that rural centers do not have high densities; and,
- reimburse residents for down-zoning.

To further verify the direction provided at the public meetings in June, July and December 1992, a random sample survey was conducted in November and December 1992. More than 400 residents were selected on a statistically valid basis. The results are documented in the *Clark County Planning Survey*, dated January 12, 1993, by Riley Research Associates.

The survey found that residents favored the description of the Hometown concept, as well as the individual components described. While the average rating was 6.33 on a 10-point scale, 84 percent rated the plan a 5.00 or higher. The highest rated components, in descending order, included the following:

1. preservation of resource lands;
2. strict design and appearance standards in high density developments;
3. directing of rural development to towns;
4. requiring larger lots in rural areas; and,
5. directing a larger share of transportation to mass transit.

Comments received in response to the DEIS, both written and oral, were addressed in the *Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS)* for the *Draft Community Framework Plan*.

THE 20-YEAR PLAN PROCESS

The *20-year Comprehensive Growth Management Plan (20-Year Plan)* builds upon the efforts undertaken during the process of developing the *Community Framework Plan* to gain consensus and provide policy direction. Goals and policies in the *20-Year Plan* are designed to further reflect the consensus

achieved and, more specifically, to answer the questions about how we will live and plan for longer term development in Clark County over the next 20 years. The overall goal of the plan is to provide maximum flexibility for each county resident to pursue his or her own goals and community goals by:

- providing a more detailed analysis of existing and likely future conditions as a basis for decisions;
- minimizing government regulation and review while protecting the public interest; and,
- setting regulations that are straightforward so that professionals are not required to interpret them.

Following the *Framework Plan* process, county staff, working with cities and the community, developed three alternative land use plans to illustrate the range of choices available to best manage Clark County's future growth. Under each of the alternatives, the projected total population for Clark County is approximately 416,071 for the year 2012. The alternatives differ in the way they accommodate this projected growth. To varying degrees, all three alternatives are consistent with the State's *Growth Management Act* and with the county's *Community Framework Plan*, but they balance the various goals and policies in different ways. While there are some significant constants in how the alternatives address rural and natural resource lands, their distinctions lie principally in where the urban boundaries are drawn, where rural, urban and resource lands are located and how much land is dedicated to each. In the case of rural and resource lands, another important distinction between the alternatives is the minimum lot size, or the number of acres required for each residential dwelling. Other key concerns included availability of commercial and industrial land and the protection of sensitive or critical areas.

The three alternatives were then analyzed in a *Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS)* to identify potential negative impacts associated with each alternative. In addition, responses to issues identified in the *SDEIS* were prepared as part of the *Final SEIS*. This *SEIS* was a joint product for both the county and its cities in order to more fully analyze the cumulative impacts of the proposed land use alternatives.

Finally, a series of joint public hearings were held before the County Planning Commission and the Board of County Commissioners during the months of September, October, November and December 1994 prior to adoption of the *20-Year Plan*.

PLAN ORGANIZATION AND USE

This *Plan* aims to reflect the uniqueness of Clark County, and seeks to preserve those unique qualities. This *Plan* has been written to recognize and reinforce the positive characteristics which make Clark County a special place.

Clark County's *20-Year Plan* contains a total of eleven elements, which cover not only the eight elements required by state law but optional elements that are important to the future success of growth management in the county.

It should be emphasized that the entire "Plan" consists not only of the *20-Year Comprehensive Growth Management Plan* but also includes the *Resource Document*, the *Community Framework Plan*, the *Findings Document* and the attached *20-Year Plan* map. For a thorough understanding of how the plan was developed, all components of the plan should be reviewed.

The organization of the *20-Year Plan* is described in the following outline. Within certain elements and for certain cities, policies for urban growth areas are included within the county's plan. Otherwise, it is presumed that city policies are consistent with the county's plan. The three major components of the *20-Year Plan* are as follows:

- ***Introduction***
- ***Community Framework Plan***
- ***20-Year Comprehensive Growth Management Plan*** including the following:
 - The ***Land Use Element*** describes the way in which the *Plan* will allocate land for different purposes and will permit or encourage development at differing densities. Additionally, the element describes critical areas including wetlands, water recharge areas and wildlife habitat, that are to be protected throughout the county.

- The ***Transportation Element*** describes the way in which key transportation components, including roadways, transit, freight, aviation and bicycle and pedestrian movement have been planned and integrated into other elements of the *Plan* to further environmental, economic and other goals and policies. It highlights policies on various modes of transportation, identifies concurrency issues and includes capital facilities planning for transportation.
- The ***Rural and Natural Resource Element*** describes the designation and proposed level of development for rural and natural resource lands in the county.
- The ***Housing Element*** describes housing needs and the direction the county and its cities will take to influence the type, location and affordability of housing throughout the county. The issues addressed include fair share housing, infill, accessory units and special needs housing.
- The ***Capital Facilities and Utilities Element*** describes the investment in public infrastructure needed to support the land use, housing, transportation and economic development elements. Emphasis is on water, sewer and storm drainage, with fire protection, law enforcement, schools, libraries, government buildings and other facility needs also being discussed.
- The ***Economic Development Element*** describes the policy direction and implementation strategies to provide for increased employment opportunities and higher family wages in the county. This element is linked to the land use and transportation elements as an integral part of the *Plan*.
- The ***Parks and Open Space Element*** describes the direction and strategies to provide for parks and open space in the county. This element is linked to the land use plan and the proposed densities to guide the acquisition and

development of parks. Plans for urban (active) parks, regional parks, open spaces and trails are discussed.

- The ***Historic Preservation Element*** describes directions and strategies to recognize and finance protection of historical and archaeological sites in the county.
- The ***Community Design Element*** describes policies and strategies to provide for design standards and the framework for consistent development in the county. Like historical and critical areas, community design is an element that can assist the community in achieving its potential. This element is included in order to encourage better designed development in the future.
- The ***Annexation Element*** describes the intent of designating areas within the urban growth boundary and provides for the annexation of the county's urban areas to cities.
- The ***Procedures for Planning Element*** describes how the plan is to be used and processes for amending and updating the plan.

The *Community Framework Plan* component of this document should be reviewed to obtain an understanding of the framework that the county and communities and used to develop their *20-Year Plans*. Guideline policies from the *Framework Plan* helped ensure the overall vision expressed by county residents would be

achieved in the *Growth Management Plans*. The policies also help ensure that land uses and major infrastructure improvements can be planned for both within the 20-year horizon required by the *GMA* and the longer term development of the county.

The *20-Year Plan* was developed following adoption of the *Framework Plan*. It contains the substance of the plan. For each element included there is generally an introduction, a discussion of that element's relationship to other elements, a description of existing conditions, estimates and projections of future needs, and goals and policies.

For some elements, strategies for implementation of goals and policies are also presented. Policies are intended as necessary to the achievement of goals, while strategies are more specific tools or activities which may help achieve adopted policies. The word "shall" is used to state explicit county commitment to following a policy and to requiring that it be followed by cities and towns. Use of that word indicates minimal flexibility or room for negotiation, while use of the word "should" implies either that there may be more consideration of varying interpretations and/or the policy is somewhat less defined at this point. The number of policies or strategies given for a particular goal in comparison with those for another goal should not be interpreted as an indication of the degree of commitment to the goal; all goals stated have equal commitment from the county. Likewise, no priority is intended by the order in which the eleven elements are presented.

